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FM AMEMBASSY MINSK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2916
INFO RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3109
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KIEV 2882
RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS 3340
RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY RIGA 1390
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 3008
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0637
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
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SIPDIS

STATE FOR DRL
STATE PLEASE PASS TO USAID/E&E/DGST PETER GRAVES
KIEV FOR AID

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [BO](#)
SUBJECT: IISEPS in Trouble Again

Ref: Minsk 436

¶1. (SBU) On September 2 Oleg Manaev, head of the deregistered polling agency IISEPS, discussed IISEPS' latest troubles with the authorities with Poloff. Belarus' Supreme Court revoked IISEPS' registration in April (reftel). Maneav subsequently registered IISEPS in Lithuania. In July, the Ministry of Justice sent Manaev a warning, accusing IISEPS of continuing to operate, and asked him to visit the MOJ to discuss. Manaev disregarded the summons. On August 26 the Minsk Department of Internal Affairs Office of Mass Actions summoned Manaev for a one-hour talk. [Note: this office usually deals with mass protests.] The police told him they did not want to deal with this, but the MOJ had ordered them to "talk" with Manaev. The MOJ claimed the MFA told them the OSCE in Vienna had quoted some IISEPS June polling data, so this was proof IISEPS was operating illegally.

¶2. (SBU) To clear things up (and avoid arrest), Manaev went with the police to the MOJ. Manaev admitted IISEPS had been deregistered, that he had re-registered in Vilnius, and that IISEPS' former members had conducted a June poll. However, he argued IISEPS' former members conducted the poll not as an organization, but as a group of private individuals, which is not illegal. According to Manaev, this flummoxed the MOJ. Manaev was released, but only after signing a written statement of what he had told the MOJ. Manaev thinks the GOB is looking for any legal way to shut IISEPS down in advance of 2006's presidential elections. Now that they have failed in this bureaucratic attempt, he fears the GOB will next employ violence.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Post aggress with Manaev that the GOB is likely seeking means to silence his organization before the 2006 elections. Belarus' other independent polling service, NOVAK, is currently under heavy financial pressure from the regime. However, to date Post has seen few cases where the Lukashenko regime has turned to violence. For the most part, the GOB prefers to use quasi-legal methods to silence the opposition. Rather than violence, Post feels Manaev and IISEPS are more likely to face exorbitant fines for their continued polling activities.

PHLIPOT